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SUBJECT: SUBMARINE CABLE LINKS SINGAPORE DIRECTLY TO U.S., BYPASSES
EARTHQUAKE ZONE

REF: A) 07 BANGKOK 81; B) SINGAPORE 1108

¶1. Singapore witnessed the official launch December 8 of a new 20,000 kilometer high bandwidth fiber optic submarine cable system that links Southeast Asia directly to the United States. The Asia-America Gateway (AAG) cable system links Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Brunei, Hong Kong and the Philippines directly across the Pacific Ocean via Guam and Hawaii to the United States, bypassing areas prone to earthquakes that have crippled telecommunications links in the past. The new cable system complements Singapore's under-construction next generation broadband network, and officials hope it will boost Singapore's reputation as a center for information technology, ultimately drawing in more foreign direct investment.

¶2. Starhub, a Singapore-listed telecommunications company, is part of a 19-company consortium of telecom companies, including AT&T, that built the US\$500 million cable system over the past three years. Starhub will start offering the high speed connecting services in January 2010. The undersea cable system uses Dense Wavelength Division Multiplexing (DWDM) technology which allows capacity to be expanded without laying additional fiber. Designed for broadband internet traffic, the AAG will be able to transmit data at speeds of 1.92 terabits per second, boosting Starhub's global bandwidth capacity by about 30 percent. Michael Sim, Senior Manager of Starhub's Corporate Communications, told Econoff that industry experts view the AAG as superior to other aged submarine cable systems, and will be able to support the burgeoning demand for voice, data and video traffic between Southeast Asia and the United States.

Around the Ring of Fire

¶3. Starhub touts AAG as the sole submarine cable system linking Southeast Asia directly to the United States rather than via traditional routes through Northeast Asia. Besides offering direct linkage and faster services, AAG bypasses the Pacific "Ring of Fire", an earthquake-prone zone site in the basin of the Pacific Ocean where nearly 90 percent of the world's earthquakes occur. The routing will mitigate the impact from natural disasters such as the 7.1 magnitude Hanchun earthquake off Taiwan in December 2006, which damaged undersea cable systems (ref A). The saga almost brought internet traffic in Singapore and the surrounding region to a standstill, disrupting commercial operations, and prompting Starhub to invest in AAG.

¶4. The AAG will bring Singapore better international connectivity and will complement Singapore's city-wide next generation broadband network, due to become operational in selected parts of the island by the second quarter of 2010 (ref B). The new network promises Internet access at up to one gigabit/second in Singapore, but without high speed cables outside Singapore speeds would be substantially lower. Singapore officials hope the cable will boost Singapore's status as a host for mission-critical data and help

attract regional and global information technology and media companies to its shores.

SHIELDS